

Our Boys and Girls

TOMMIE'S QUERRIES ABOUT SANTA CLAUS.

Mamma, where does Santa Claus live?
And what does he do all the year.
While the fruits and birds and pretty flowers,
And the butterflies all are here?

Has he got some little girls and boys,
That run and romp like me?
And is he as fat and jolly and good,
As he looks in his pictures to be?

And, Mamma, when Christmas time comes around,
Do they hang up their stockings for him
And think their papa will come down the flue,
And fill them up to the brim?

Why don't he bring poor folks more things?
Oh, Mamma, I think its mean!
He never brought a single toy
To poor lame Johnny Green!

Say, Mamma, when I grow into a man,
Like Papa or Uncle Jerome,
Can't I go off and find the place
Where Santa Claus has his home?

And talk to him, Mamma, and tell him I think
It's very far from right,
The way he slights the poor girls and boys
When he comes on Christmas night!

—Lissie C. Farmer.

A CHRISTMAS CURE.

Santa Claus sat by the fire in his own house, looking very much troubled.

Santa Claus sat there thinking—thinking. It was just before Christmas. What was the matter with the good, jolly old Saint? Had his sleigh broken down? Had any of his reindeer got loose?

But no—it was none of these things. Couldn't he find toys enough to go round? Bless your dear little anxious heart, don't you be afraid of that! Santa Claus had toys enough. That wasn't the trouble.

One stocking there was, for which Santa Claus had not yet planned a single thing; and that was why poor dear old Santa Claus was in such a state of worry and anxiety. This stocking belonged to a little boy whose good parents had long before Christmas sent in his name to Santa Claus. But although there had been plenty of time, and Santa Claus had put plenty of thought upon the matter, he had not yet been able to decide upon one thing for that little boy's stocking.

Perhaps it seems strange to you that Santa should be puzzled about such a thing as that, when filling stockings is his regular profession; but the little boy to whom that stocking belonged was a very strange and unusual child. Whatever was given to him he would either break to pieces very soon or do some naughty mischief with it.

Yet kind old Santa could not bear to leave even this stocking empty. So he had been puzzling his brains to find something with which the little boy could not hurt people, and something he could not break; and although he had been thinking over all his lists of toys and presents, nothing had he found yet.

"Chirp! Chirp!" sounded a sharp little voice. "You may as well give it up. He doesn't deserve anything, the little scamp!"

"Oh! Is that you Crickett?" said Santa. "Come up here," and as he held out his fat forefinger, a tiny black cricket reached it with a sudden jump.

"You may as well give it up!" creaked the cricket. "You can't think of anything, I know."

"I know, I know," said Santa. "No, I can't give up the donkey!—nor any other of those fine little animals that we have this year. I had thought of a nice little hammer and a box of nails, and some blocks of wood for him to hammer the nails into! Hey, now! what do you think of that?"

"What do I think?" said the cricket. "I think, St. Nicholas, that you have forgotten how the little boy beat his brother with his drumsticks; how he snipped his sister's fingers with the scissors; how he threw his harmonicon at the nurse; how he—"

"Dear, dear, dear!" groaned Santa, "so he did!"

"And if you keep giving him things when he uses them so wrongly," continued the cricket, "how will he ever learn better? To be sure, mamma and papa and all his kind friends are trying to teach him, and it is necessary that everybody should help to train such a boy as—"

"I know," interrupted Santa. "I know. You're a wise, little counsellor, and not as hard-hearted as you seem. And if you think it will cure the poor little fellow, I suppose we must give him the sawdust this year."

"Yes," said the cricket solemnly, "sawdust it must be."

Christmas morning came. The little boy, whose name Santa Claus did not wish mentioned, saw all the other children pull out one treasure after another from their long, well-stuffed stockings, while in his own, which he had hung up with so much hope the night before, there was nothing but sawdust!

If I should use all the sad words in the English language, I could never tell you how sad that little boy was as he poured the sawdust out of his stocking, and found that Santa Claus had really sent him nothing else.

It was almost a year later, just before Christmas, when Santa Claus again sat by his fire—thinking.

But this time he was in no trouble; no, indeed, not he! He was rounder, and rosier, and jollier than ever before; and how he was smiling and chuckling to himself! His eyes twinkled so, and were so very bright, that you could almost have lit a candle at them. He and the cricket had been planning all sorts of ecstatic surprises for the stockings of the boy to whom they had given sawdust the year before; for, if you can believe it, the little boy had been trying all the year to be careful and gentle, and he was really quite changed.

"Sawdust is a grand thing," chirped the cricket, leaping about in delight.—St. Nicholas.

THE SOLDIER'S FLOWER.

It is difficult to connect the crimson flower that brightens our homes at Christmas-tide with the grim fortune of war. Nevertheless, without this feature of our past history, the Poinsettia may have blossomed unknown by our people for many long years.

It was discovered by Joel Roberts Poinsett, who was sent to Mexico by this country as a special minister in 1822. Mr. Poinsett was a native of South Carolina. He was a man of much learning and culture. He had previously held official distinctions in foreign

countries and was offered a commission in the Russian army by the Czar. In his later years he served America as Secretary of War, but at the close of his term chose studious retirement in his own home. His beautiful garden in the South afforded him much pleasure. Driving out from Greenville, South Carolina, his home can still be seen, and there the tall poinsettia, graceful as a lily on its stem, sheds its rich flame and bares its golden heart, an emblem of courage and cheer for the holy holiday. It typifies to perfection the name given it by the Mexican people, "Flower of the Holy Night."—Progressive Teacher.

THE STORY.

She came to me begging a story,
My darling, with eyes so blue,
"Not of fairies or elfs or goblins,
But a story really true."

I paused a moment in fancy,
To wonder just what it should be,
Some tale of my own happy childhood,
So merry and full of glee.

Or a wonderful picture of travel,
So many joys to unfold,
All painted in bright glowing colors,
For little blue eyes to behold.

But no, the wee maid has decided,
As she nestled still closer with joy,
She wanted the dearest of stories,
The one about God's little boy.

So I told her of shepherds frightened,
While watching wee lambs in the night,
Of angels all singing so sweet
And the star that shone ever so bright.

Carefully guiding the wise men,
To where the dear baby lay
All cuddled up in the manger,
In the midst of the sweet smelling hay.

Then I told her of Mary the mother,
So proud of her dear little son,
And the wonderful message He gave us,
Peace and good will to each one.

As we rocked and talked in the twilight,
Her eyes became dreamy with sleep,
And with her head almost nodding she whispered,
"I think Baby Jesus was sweet."

"And of all the stories you tell me,
The one that I do most enjoy,
The one I like over and over
Is the one about God's little boy."

A CHRISTMAS WISH.

I'm purty glad 'at I'm just me,
Buhcause I'd surely hate to be
A Twins. For then there's two of you.
Just think! Soon as your bath is through
They just fill up th' tub an' then
They bathe an' dry you once again.

But when it comes to Christmas eve,
W'y, 'at's th' time 'at I buhlieve
I'd like to be a Twins, buhcause
Ol' fat an' jolly Santa Claus
Would haf to treat you double-nice
An' fill your stockin's for you twice.

When I look at our Christmas tree
I wisht there was anuther me;
I wisht I was two little boys,
So we could trade all of our toys
An' trade 'em all back, one by one,
An' have just twice as much o' fun.

But when it's Christmas dinner time
W'y, when they ast th' blessin', I'm
A-thinkin' hard inside o' me
How mighty splendid it would be
If when 'at dinner time begins
I could be changed into a Twins!

—Wilbur D. Nesbit.